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MEMORANDUM ON THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL
INTELLIGENCE

The Director of Central Intelligence is the principal foreign intelligence officer of the Government. By law, he is charged with responsibility for the collation and evaluation of intelligence from all sources relating to the national security and for the dissemination of this intelligence, including all estimates and appraisals of developing situations, to the President, the National Security Council, and others responsible for formulating national security policies. The proper performance of this task is the Director's primary responsibility. The work requires an extensive organization, which exists in the Central Intelligence Agency, competent to examine and properly interpret official reports, secret intelligence, and a vast number of public documents, interviews and pronouncements of foreign officials. The aim is to develop, insofar as this is possible, an understanding of the motives, objectives and actions of foreign governments, where our national security is involved.

In addition, the Director of Central Intelligence is responsible for the coordination and guidance of the intelligence activities of the several government departments and agencies and for making recommendations to the President and the National Security Council concerning the effectiveness of these activities and ways in which they might be improved. Thus, the Director carries two responsibilities -- one to the Central Intelligence Agency which he heads, the other to the entire intelligence community, which involves many departments and agencies of the Government.

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Additionally, the Central Intelligence Agency, under the Director, is charged by law with the performance of such additional services and duties as the National Security Council may from time to time direct. There are many such activities and they are all considered essential to our security. In carrying out the wishes of the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency's actions in the field are carefully coordinated in advance, in Washington, with all who bear a responsibility for the conduct of national security affairs. At no time is CIA free to act independently. It never does, and this has been the situation from the beginning.

The Central Intelligence Agency is staffed by a most competent and dedicated group of men and women. Their work is secret, and this is the way it must be. Furthermore, they are most effective when they are not in public view. This requires sacrifice on the part of many, for the public recognition for a job well done and the right to respond to criticism -- all too often unfairly levied is not their privilege. The Central Intelligence Agency has had great successes and also some failures. The successes go unnoticed, and this is proper. All too often, however, their failures are enormously exaggerated to the detriment of an organization that is serving the essential interests of our country.